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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 PODGORICA 000204

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SENSITIVE  
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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [MASS](#) [MW](#)  
SUBJECT: VISIT OF ADM ULRICH TO MONTENEGRO, MAY 21-22

PODGORICA 00000204 001.3 OF 003

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PLEASE HANDLE ACCORDINGLY

1. (SBU) SUMMARY. COMMANDER OF JOINT FORCES COMMAND NAPLES (COMJFC) AND U.S. NAVAL FORCES EUROPE (COMNAVEUR) ADMIRAL HENRY G. ULRICH VISITED MONTENEGRO FROM 21-22 MAY 2007. ADM ULRICH'S VISIT COINCIDED WITH THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF MONTENEGRIN INDEPENDENCE AND THE U.S. NAVY SHIP VISIT BY THE SUB-TENDER EMORY S. LAND (ESL) WITH A CREW OF OVER 1200 OFFICERS AND SAILORS. COMJFC AND COMNAVEUR MET SEPARATELY WITH THE MONTENEGRIN PRESIDENT AND FOREIGN MINISTER, MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF. ALL INTERLOCUTORS EXPRESSED SATISFACTION AT THE PACE OF MONTENEGRO'S EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF BILATERAL DEFENSE RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.

MESSAGE OF SUPPORT

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2. (SBU) ADM ULRICH OFFERED A CLEAR MESSAGE OF SUPPORT FOR MONTENEGRO'S EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY ASPIRATIONS. THROUGHOUT HIS MEETINGS WITH MONTENEGRO'S SENIOR LEADERSHIP, ADM ULRICH UNDERScored THE IMPRESSIVE PROGRESS THAT MONTENEGRO HAS MADE IN ITS FIRST YEAR AS A SOVEREIGN STATE AND WAS PLEASED TO BE IN MONTENEGRO ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE. ADM ULRICH AND PRESIDENT FILIP VUJANOVIC REVIEWED THE LIST OF ACHIEVEMENTS MADE BY MONTENEGRO FROM ENTRY INTO PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE ON 26 NOVEMBER 2006 TO THE SIGNING OF THE STATUS OF FORCES AGREEMENT

(SOFA) BY THE LATTER IN WASHINGTON ON 1 MAY 2007. ADM ULRICH STRESSED U.S./NATO COMMITMENT TO WORK WITH AND PROVIDE ASSISTANCE FOR MONTENEGROS DEFENSE REFORM EFFORTS. PRESIDENT VUJANOVIC EXPRESSED HIS GRATITUDE TO THE UNITED STATES FOR SUPPORT OF MONTENEGRIN EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY INTEGRATION AND ASSISTANCE TO THE MONTENEGRIN ARMED FORCES (MAF). THE PRESIDENT ADDED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD SOON APPROVE THE NECESSARY DEFENSE LAWS AND STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS THAT WOULD FACILITATE FURTHER REFORM.

#### STRENGTHENED PARTNERSHIP

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13. (SBU) PRESIDENT VUJANOVIC EMPHASIZED THAT THE STRATEGIC AIM OF MONTENEGRO WAS INCLUSION IN TO EURO-ATLANTIC INSTITUTIONS - FULL MEMBERSHIP IN NATO AND EU. FURTHER, PRESIDENT VUJANOVIC EXPRESSED HIS SATISFACTION WITH HIS RECENT VISIT TO WASHINGTON AND MEETINGS WITH SENIOR U.S. OFFICIALS. THE PRESIDENT HIGHLIGHTED HIS SIGNING OF A STATUS OF FORCES AGREEMENT WITH SECRETARY RICE, BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH SECRETARY GATES AND

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INAUGURATION OF THE STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM WITH THE STATE OF MAINE. FURTHER, THE PRESIDENT STRESSED THAT THE RECENT CONCLUSION OF AN ARTICLE 98 AGREEMENT THROUGH AN EXCHANGE OF DIPLOMATIC NOTES WAS IN MONTENEGRO'S INTEREST AND WOULD INCREASE THE POSSIBILITIES OF SECURITY COOPERATION. ALL OUR ACTIONS TO DATE, ACCORDING TO THE PRESIDENT SERVED TO STRENGTHEN THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND MONTENEGRO. PRESIDENT VUJANOVIC VIEWED CLOSE COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED STATES AS ESSENTIAL. IN PARTICULAR, THE PRESIDENT BELIEVED THAT U.S PROGRAMS SUCH AS INTERNATIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING WERE KEY TO MAF TRANSFORMATION AND ABILITY TO SECURE INTEROPERABILITY AND ATTAIN NATO STANDARDS. ADM ULRICH RESPONDED THAT FROM A U.S. NAVY PERSPECTIVE STRENGTHENING OUR MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WILL CONTRIBUTE TO FUTURE MARITIME SECURITY. THE ADM ADDED THAT MARITIME SECURITY IS ESSENTIAL FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THIS REGION. REFERRING TO PERCEPTIONS OF NATO, PRESIDENT VUJANOVIC STATED THAT IT WAS UP TO THE MONTENEGRIN LEADERSHIP TO CONDUCT AN AWARENESS CAMPAIGN.

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#### REGIONAL ISSUES

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14. (SBU) ADM ULRICH EXPRESSED INTEREST IN THE MONTENEGRIN LEADERSHIP'S VIEWS ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN BELGRADE AS WELL AS THE ISSUE OF KOSOVO FINAL STATUS. PRESIDENT VUJANOVIC COMMENTED THAT THE RECENT FORMATION OF A DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT IN BELGRADE, SERBIA BY PRESIDENT BORIS TADIC AND PRIME MINISTER VOJISLAV KOSTUNICA WAS A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT AND THAT ANOTHER ELECTION CYCLE WOULD NOT BE IN THE INTEREST OF SERBIAS DEMOCRATIC FORCES OR THE REGION. THE PRESIDENT OFFERED THAT

MONTENEGRO HAS AND WOULD CONTINUE TO SUPPORT DEMOCRATIC FORCES IN BELGRADE AND SOUGHT TO STRENGTHEN BOTH POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TIES. FOREIGN MINISTER (FOMIN) MILAN ROCEN EXPRESSED A SIMILAR VIEW THAT A DEMOCRATIC AND PROSPEROUS SERBIA COULD SERVE AS AN ECONOMIC ENGINE IN THE REGION AND INCREASE THE WESTERN BALKANS OVERALL ABILITY TO ENTER THE EUROPEAN UNION. REFERENCE KOSOVO, THE FOMIN ARTICULATED THE POSITION THAT ONLY A STABLE AND SECURE MONTENEGRO COULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE RESOLUTION OF KOSOVO. WITH SIZEABLE SERB 32% AND ALBANIAN 7% MINORITIES, KOSOVO COULD BECOME A POLARIZING ISSUE FOR MULTI-ETHNIC MONTENEGRO AND THEREFORE THE FOMIN STRESSED THAT THE BEST POLICY MONTENEGRO COULD PURSUE WAS TO KEEP POSITIVE RELATIONS WITH BOTH BELGRADE AND PRISTINA. THE FOMIN HOPED FOR UNDERSTANDING THAT MONTENEGRO WOULD NOT BE THE FIRST IN THE REGION TO RECOGNIZE AN INDEPENDENT KOSOVO.

#### MILITARY COOPERATION

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15. (SBU) DEFENSE MINISTER (DEFMIN) BORO VUCINIC EMPHASIZED THE "STRATEGIC" PARTNERSHIP THAT THE MONTENEGRIN ARMED FORCES SEEKS WITH THE U.S. MILITARY. THE DEFMIN VIEWED MILITARY COOPERATION WITH THE U.S. AS VITAL TO THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE MAF AND APPRECIATED ADM ULRICH'S CONSISTENT AND VALUABLE SUPPORT. DEFMIN VUCINIC ARTICULATED HIS OWN PLANS TO MOVE FORWARD ON KEY DEFENSE LAWS AND DOCUMENTS. THE DEFMIN RECAPPED PROGRESS TO DATE SINCE PFP MEMBERSHIP IN NOV 2006 AS MONTENEGRO SUBMITTED ITS PRESENTATION AND SECURITY DOCUMENTS AND WAS PREPARED TO SHORTLY OPEN ITS MILITARY OFFICE IN BRUSSELS. LTC GEN JOVAN LAKCEVIC THE MONTENEGRIN CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF (CGS) SUMMARIZED HIS EFFORTS TO CONTINUE MOVING MONTENEGRIN DEFENSE FORCES IN THE DIRECTION OF THE U.S AND NATO MEMBERSHIP. LAKCEVIC ASSESSED THAT THE MAF HAD TO DEVELOP NICHE CAPABILITIES, MODERNIZE THE FORCE, AND PREPARE A SECURITY CONTRIBUTION TO ON-GOING NATO/U.S. OPERATIONS. ACCORDING TO THE CGS, ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING WAS FUNDAMENTAL AND ANY ASSISTANCE THAT ADM ULRICH COULD PROVIDE WOULD BE WELCOME. (NOTE- MONTENEGRO WILL RECEIVE \$200,000 IN IMET X-YEAR FUNDING THAT HAS BEEN ALLOCATED TO A MULTI-MEDIA ENGLISH LANGUAGE LAB). THE CGS VIEWED THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIS JUNIOR OFFICERS AND NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AS KEY TO THE MAF'S TRANSFORMATION AND LOOKED FORWARD TO U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE. THE CGS ALSO STRESSED THE NEED FOR MONTENEGRO TO ACQUIRE NEW COMBAT UNIFORMS NOT ONLY FOR FUTURE OPERATIONS AND TRAINING BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY TO PROVIDE MAF MEMBERS A SENSE OF MONTENEGRIN IDENTITY AND RAISE MORALE. (NOTE- THE MONTENEGRIN DEFMIN INITIATED A REQUEST TO PURCHASE U.S. COMBAT UNIFORMS THROUGH THE FOREIGN MILITARY SALES PROGRAM.) GEN LAKCEVIC STATED THAT HE WOULD SOON SEND A MONTENEGRIN OFFICER TO SERVE AS A LIAISON OFFICER AT COMJFC NAPLES AND THAT HE LOOKED FORWARD TO GREATER MILITARY COOPERATION WITH THE U.S AND NATO. THE CGS BELIEVED THAT THE MAF WOULD INCREASE ITS PARTICIPATION IN FUTURE PFP EXERCISES NEXT YEAR AND SEND OBSERVERS TO NATO OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN. ADDRESSING THE GATHERED GUESTS DURING THE RECEPTION ON BOARD THE ESL, ADM ULRICH STATED THAT MONTENEGRO'S LEADERS SHOULD BE COMMENDED FOR THE IMPRESSIVE RESULTS ACHIEVED TOWARDS EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY INTEGRATION. ADM ULRICH PARTICULARLY HIGHLIGHTED HIS SATISFACTION AND CLOSE COOPERATION WITH LTC GEN LAKCEVIC WHOM HE CALLED A TRUE PATRIOT, REAL LEADER, AND A MAN OF VISION. ADM ULRICH ADDED THAT THE MONTENEGRIN PEOPLE ARE LUCKY TO HAVE THIS MAN IN CHARGE OF ITS MILITARY AT THE RIGHT

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MOMENT IN HISTORY.

16. (SBU) OTHER REQUESTS RAISED BY GENERAL LAKCEVIC INCLUDED NATO NCO TRAINING, ASSISTANCE IN INSTALLING COSTAL RADARS, EVALUATION OF EXISTING NAVAL FACILITIES, DESIGN ASSISTANCE FOR THE NEW NAVAL BASE AT BAR, AND DIVER TRAINING. ADMIRAL ULRICH AND GEN LAKCEVIC ALSO DISCUSSED THE POSSIBILITY OF HOSTING A REGIONAL MARSHALL CENTER SEMINAR IN PODGORICA ON DEFENSE REFORM THAT WOULD BE CONDUCTED IN SERBO-CROATIAN.

#### U.S. NAVY SHIP VISITS

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17. (SBU) IN THE PAST EIGHT MONTHS, U.S. NAVY SHIPS - THE USS ANZIO AND USS EMORY S. LAND - VISITED TIVAT, MONTENEGRO; AS WELL AS THE USS ROOSEVELT AS PART OF A FOUR-NATION NATO GROUP VISIT. THE USS EMORY S. LAND (ESL) SHIP VISITED LASTED FROM 17 MAY 2007 TO 25 MAY 2007. TO THE CREDIT OF U.S. NAVY PERSONNEL THERE WERE NO INCIDENTS DURING THE PORT VISIT. ADDITIONALLY, U.S. SAILORS INJECTED APPROXIMATELY A ONE MILLION EUROS INTO THE LOCAL ECONOMY DURING LIBERTY. MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE ESL VISIT SENT A STRONG PUBLIC DIPLOMACY MESSAGE OF PARTNERSHIP AND GOOD WILL TO THE MONTENEGRIN LEADERSHIP, NAVY, LOCAL OFFICIALS AND COMMUNITIES. OF NOTE, ESL COMMUNITY RELATIONS EFFORTS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE U.S. EMBASSY PUBLIC DIPLOMACY OFFICER REACHED OUT TO MINORITY AND UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITIES. THE SIXTH FLEET BAND PERFORMED IN ULCINJ, A MAJORITY ALBANIAN COMMUNITY, FOR THE FIRST-TIME. SAILORS CONDUCTED EXTENSIVE REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS TO AN ORPHANAGE IN BIJELA. FURTHER, THE ESL HELD A FORMAL RECEPTION ATTENDED BY THE MONTENEGRIN DEFMIN, CHOD AND MILITARY MEMBERS, DIPLOMATIC CORPS, LOCAL OFFICIALS AS WELL AS LEADING OPPOSITION FIGURES, IN PARTICULAR, ANDRIJA MANDIC OF THE SERB NATIONAL PARTY (SNS). THE PRESENCE OF SNS LEADER MANDIC WAS SIGNIFICANT ONLY A FEW MONTHS AGO HE PROUDLY BOASTED OF HIS ROLE AS AN AIR DEFENSE OFFICER AND ATTEMPTS TO SHOOT DOWN U.S./NATO AIRCRAFT DURING OPERATION ALLIED FORCE.

#### COMMENT

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18. (SBU) THIS WAS THE SECOND VISIT BY ADM ULRICH TO MONTENEGRO IN THE PAST EIGHT MONTHS AND ONE OF A SERIES OF SENIOR LEVEL U.S. DEFENSE VISITS THAT BEGAN WITH FORMER SECRETARY RUMSFELD IN SEPTEMBER 2006. THESE VISITS HAVE PLAYED A CRITICAL ROLE IN ESTABLISHING OUR NASCENT DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP WITH MONTENEGRO AND AIDED THE CONCLUSION OF KEY BILATERAL DEFENSE AGREEMENTS. ALL THESE VISIBLE SIGNS OF SUPPORT, FROM SHIP VISITS TO THE INAUGURATION OF A STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM, HAVE FUELED MONTENEGRIN EXPECTATIONS ABOUT FUTURE LEVELS OF ASSISTANCE. THE EMBASSY AND VISITING DOD AND MILITARY OFFICIALS HAVE CONSISTENTLY SOUGHT TO TEMPER THOSE EXPECTATIONS POINTING OUT THAT U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE COMPLEMENTS BUT CAN NOT REPLACE MONTENGRIN DEFENSE COMMITMENTS. MONTENEGRO WILL IN THE END DETERMINE ITS OWN PACE OF EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY INTEGRATION. THE PACE IN MONTENEGRO'S FIRST YEAR OF INDEPENDENCE HOLDS PROMISE FOR THE FUTURE.

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